

Hampton Block (Telephone Company Offices)
Clifton Townsite
Park Avenue
Clifton
Greenlee County
Arizona

HABS No. AZ-186

HABS
ARIZ
6-CLIFT,
17-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Western Region
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California 94107

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HAMPTON BLOCK
(Telephone Company Offices)

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Location:

Clifton Townsite, Park Avenue, Clifton, Greenlee County, Arizona

Significance:

Associated with commerce in Clifton and the development of Clifton.

Description:

This two-story brick building is one of several standing side-by-side along Park Avenue. The facade has a symmetrical layout, with five windows at the second floor, and three centrally located entrance doors flanked by two storefront window openings at the first floor. The facade has been sheathed with modern aluminum siding. The roof is flat with parapets. The parapet at the west front has a decorative brick cornice visible above the aluminum siding. A concrete porch stoop provides access to the entries. The original windows are wood, double-hung, with a one-over-one pattern. Several of the original windows have been boarded up. A modern aluminum awning has been added over one of the two storefront windows at the first floor. An addition has been made to the rear of the building.

History:

This two story brick building was known as the Hampton Block after the two brothers who constructed it on a speculative basis. Wade and John Hampton got their start in the cattle industry but quickly turned their attention to real estate development. They constructed the Hampton Block in 1905, it being one of the few structures on the east side to survive the ravages of the 1906 flood. The main tenant of the building was the telephone company.¹

Wade and John Hampton started a cattle enterprise in Graham County around the turn of the century, but the two brothers quickly realized that real estate and business investments were more to their skills. John went on to a successful career as a businessman in Phoenix, after serving as a representative of Graham County and Greenlee County in the State Legislature. Wade took ill in 1918 and died at his brother's house in Phoenix. John continued to manage their real estate holdings, including the Hampton Block.²

The telephone came early to Clifton, with phones installed by the last decade of the nineteenth century on a private line basis. By 1900, investors organized the Gila Valley Telephone Company, headquartered in Safford. Clifton resident Henry Hill purchased a one-sixth interest in this company in 1901 and made plans to construct an office in Clifton. By June of 1901, a small frame building was completed next to the Post Office. In 1904, the Consolidated Telephone and Telegraph Company acquired the holdings of the Gila Valley Telephone Company. Looking for suitable space to match their aspirations, company officials contracted with the Hampton Brothers as the main tenant for the Hampton Block. In 1911 Consolidated Telephone briefly became Arizona Telephone

and Telegraph, but on May 20, 1912, Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph of Denver took over operations. In later years this company was known as Mountain Bell. The telephone exchange remained in the Hampton Block until 1954 when Mountain Bell constructed a new building in Morenci. In recent years the Hampton Block has been the home of the Clifton Flowers shop.³

While the telephone company was the main occupant of the building, the Hampton Brothers leased space to others on a temporary basis. After the creation of Greenlee County in 1909 and before the completion of the Greenlee County Courthouse in 1912, the Hampton Block housed Greenlee County offices. The first meeting of the Greenlee County Board of Supervisors was held in the Hampton Block, in the office of District Attorney E. V. Horton in January of 1911. In later years the Hampton Block housed the office of the town's dentist, including Dr. Vernon M. Blythe and Dr. Arthur J. Kent.⁴

Sources (endnotes):

1. Sanborn fire insurance maps, 1901, 1904, 1908; 1914; Copper Era December 13, 1906 (I, 1: 1-5).
2. Copper Era December 21, 1917 (I, 1: 2); January 4, 1918 (I, 1: 6); February 20, 1920 (I, 5: 2); August 28, 1926 (I, 3: 1-2).
3. Copper Era June 6, 1901 (I, 3: 1); June 20, 1902 (I, 3: 1); telephone company history provided by Vic Parsons, Telephone Museum of Southern Arizona.
4. Copper Era January 6, 1911 (I, 1: 1); July 6, 1923 (I, 5: 2).

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